



ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS ON LAND ADJACENT TO HUNTER AVENUE, ASHFORD, KENT

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The remainder of the material is typical of later prehistoric industries and probably contemporary with the Later Bronze Age or Iron Age structural evidence. It includes flakes and expediently made tools. This material would be consistent with flintworking patterns noted for the later prehistoric period. Typically these are small in quantity, have a high utilization rate and are present in low densities scattered within settlements or across the field-systems. They represent opportunistic and short-lived knapping episodes whereby pieces of readily-to-hand raw materials were struck with little overall strategy or proficiency until suitable edges were procured. Once the task was completed, the flint would be discarded with little formality (cf. Young and Humphrey 1999; Humphrey 2003; 2007).

Context	Description
313	Squat flake with fine blunting or scraping type retouch around around much of its perimeter
317	Moderate convex retouch around distal end and moderate inverse steep flaking along part of right ventral - irregular/improvised scraper
317	Squat flake with irregular convex shallow to steep retouch around distal end
317	Deliberately broken - distal missing. Possible shallow retouch on left dorsal
317	Has odd 'keeled' striking platform - a type of retouch?

Table 2: Details of 'Later' Retouched Implements

THE PREHISTORIC POTTERY ASSEMBLAGE

by Mike Seager Thomas

Introduction

The prehistoric pottery from Hunter Avenue, which consists wholly of small context assemblages, comprises 111 sherds weighing just over one kilogram (see Table 3 in Appendix p. 49). It can be divided into three traditions/period groups: post Deverel-Rimbury, here probably dating to the Late Bronze Age but possibly incorporating some slightly later material; saucepan pot and so-called 'Wealden', dating to the Middle Iron Age; and 'Belgic', dating to the Late Iron Age. The bulk of the material (and probably the bulk of the features as well) are Middle Iron Age, with the post Deverel-Rimbury tradition represented by a handful of sherds only, most certainly from later features, and the Late Iron Age by a single distinguishable sherd.

The Fabrics

The post Deverel-Rimbury pottery, most of which is heavily weathered, comprises a suite of just four flint-tempered fabrics ranging from fine to medium (*FMF*), to coarse (*MCF* and *CF1* and *CF2*):

Fabric *FMF* — 3–5% <0.5–2 mm burnt flint inclusions

Fabric *MCF* — 5% <0.5–3 mm burnt flint inclusions; fine sandy matrix

Fabric *CF1* — 3% <0.5–6 mm burnt flint inclusions. Surviving roughly burnished surfaces

Fabric *CF2* — 10–15% <0.5–4 mm burnt flint inclusions with some softer unidentifiable inclusions (chalk or grog)

Owing to a lack of feature sherds, not a single one of which was recovered, and the small size of the group overall, it is not possible to date it with certainty, but, while possibly an artefact of survival, the small number of fabrics, the apparent emphasis on flint-tempering and the mostly thin bodies of the sherds recovered, are together characteristic of an early, so-called 'plain ware' or 'undecorated' phase of the tradition, dateable to Late Bronze Age, and it is to this period therefore that it is attributed. Pottery belonging to the earlier post Deverel-Rimbury tradition is not particularly well known from the immediate area, but is widely and closely paralleled in assemblages from elsewhere in Kent and the surrounding counties, so the primary importance of the assemblage here is as yet another dot on the Late Bronze Age distribution map.

The Middle Iron Age pottery comprises a regionally distinct suite of one grog-tempered (*G*) and four quite similar burnished fabrics containing siderite nodules, one sandy (*FeQ*), two sandy with rare flint inclusions (*FeQF1* and *FeQF2*) and one with what looks like local Kentish Rag inclusions (*FeR*):

Fabric *G* — Unquantifiable grog; and nodular Fe inclusions. Roughly finished surfaces with a soapy feel

Fabric *FeQ* — 5% nodular 1–2 mm Fe inclusions; fine sandy matrix. Burnished surfaces

Fabric *FeQF1* — 5% nodular 1–2 mm Fe and 1–2% <0.5–1 mm burnt flint inclusions; fine to medium sandy matrix. Burnished surfaces

Fabric *FeQF2* — 5–10% nodular 1–5 mm Fe and 1–2% <0.5–1 mm burnt flint inclusions; fine sandy matrix. Burnished surfaces

Fabric *FeR* — Unquantifiable Fe and <1% 0.5–2 mm possible Kentish Rag inclusions. Burnished surfaces

In addition, a coarse sandy fabric from the site (*CQ*), which was not reliably associated with this suite but which has contemporary parallels elsewhere may also be of Middle Iron Age date.

These fabrics are quite friable and sherds in them have suffered considerable fragmentation, but, with the exception of fabric *CQ*, they are much less weathered than the post Deverel-Rimbury sherds with which they were associated, most retaining traces of their original burnished surfaces. Their Middle Iron Age credentials are established by the following:

Firstly, they occur on site in reliably dated Middle Iron Age forms, including the saucepan pot (Figs 17.1 & 17.6), which, outside Kent, is widely distributed across southeast and south central England; two common so-called 'Wealden' or southeastern forms; the S-profile jar (Fig. 17.4) and what I have described elsewhere as the curviform jar, in this case with characteristic Middle Iron Age linear decoration (Fig. 17.2); and three foot-ring or pedestal bases (Figs. 17.3, 17.5 and an

unillustrated vessel from context [313]), a form with earlier Iron Age credentials but also very much part of the foregoing 'Wealden' Middle Iron Age koine. (For parallels and an up to date discussion of these vessel types see Seager Thomas 2010).

Secondly, a similar suite was present at nearby Hawkinge, where it was stratigraphically separated from large assemblages of so-called 'Marnian' pottery, south-east Kent's predominant Early Iron Age tradition, and 'Belgic' Late Iron Age pottery.

Lastly, they are distinguishable from earlier and later pottery from the immediate neighbourhood (e.g. from Park Farm East and Brisley Farm, the assemblages from which were dominated, respectively, by later post Deverel-Rimbury and 'Atrebat' Late Iron Age pottery).

The distinguishable Late Iron Age sherd comprises a 'Belgic' rippled shoulder (Fig.17.7). It is in a fine sandy fabric (Q) with a slightly soapy feel probably indicative of the presence of a fine grog fraction invisible to the unaided eye.

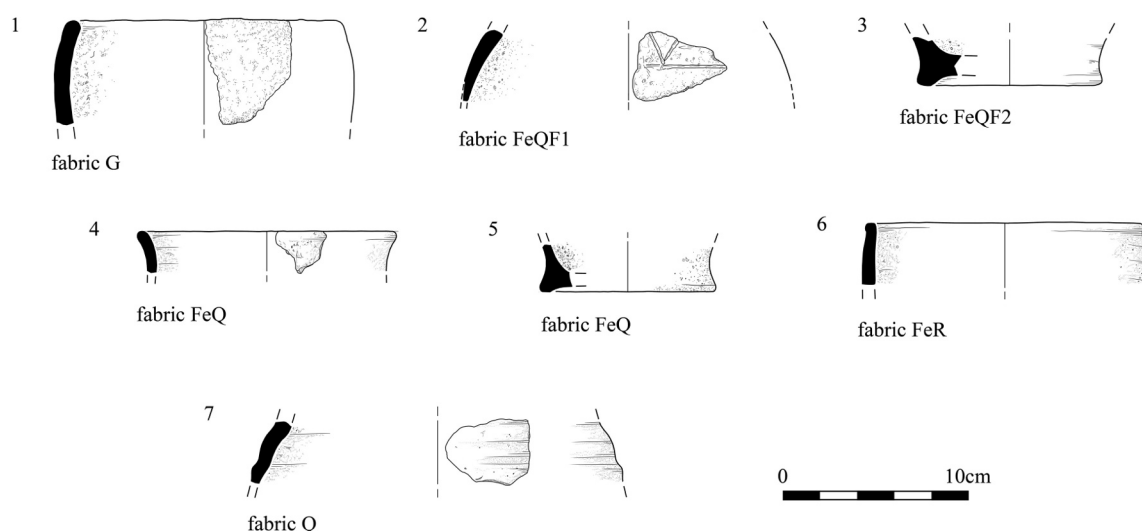


Fig. 17: Prehistoric pottery

Discussion

The interest of the assemblage is two-fold. Kent Middle Iron Age pottery has not often been recognized as such and, as a result, is poorly understood (Champion 2007a). The recovery of an assemblage, albeit small and fragmented, that can be related to and clearly distinguished from (typologically and in terms of the fabrics comprising it), earlier and later pottery both from the site and nearby, is an essential first step towards its accurate characterization, both locally and regionally. Of particular note in this respect is the absence from the assemblage of 'Marnian' types, the dating of which has sometimes been stretched into the Middle Iron Age, perhaps in order to fill

the apparent gap, and the close association within it of saucepan and 'Wealden' types, the chronological attribution of which has been, if anything, even more flexible.

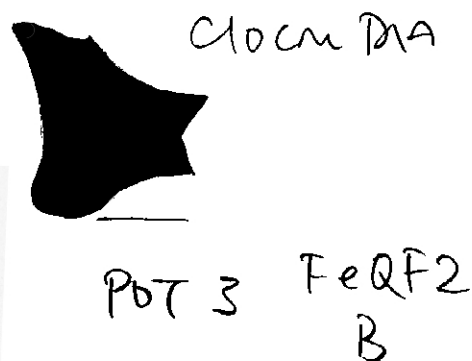
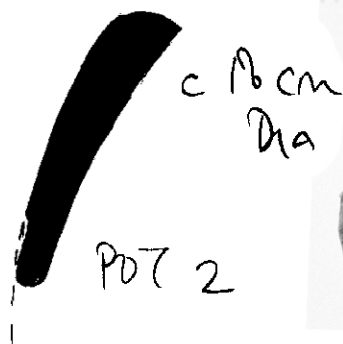
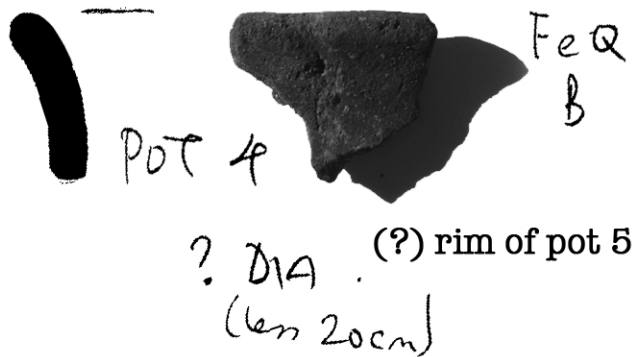
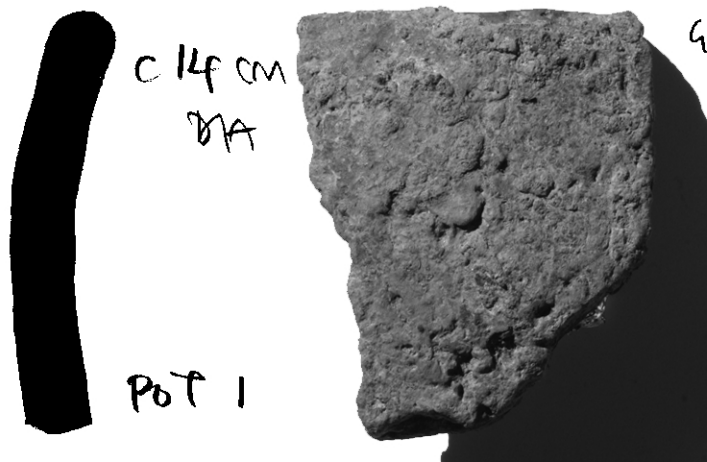
In addition, the assemblage places the Middle Iron Age locally in a wider regional context. Despite an alleged absence of saucepan pottery from the county during the period, it is significant that it incorporates sherds from two pots that are best reconstructed as such, albeit in local fabrics (a possible implication of this is that where saucepan pottery and/or the types of pottery with which it was associated at Hunter Avenue is absent locally, so is the Middle Iron Age). Similarly, the shift away from flint tempering at this period has analogues in immediately surrounding regions (specifically East Sussex, Greater London and parts of Surrey). There is no evidence however that, in terms of pottery, Hunter Avenue was integrated into a regional exchange/procurement network, the contemporary existence of which is indicated by the export of stone from the county and the movement of saucepan pottery outside it (Morris 1994; Seager Thomas 2005; 2010).

DISCUSSION

Whilst by no means extensive, the limited archaeological evidence derived from the investigations at Hunter Avenue has added to the expanding dataset of information concerning the prehistoric and historic development of Ashford and the surrounding region. The evidence for Mesolithic and/or Early Neolithic activity has merely added another site to the list of those where occupation during these periods has been detected, whereas the Late Bronze Age to Middle Iron Age evidence is important as it adds to a growing body of information concerning the development of agricultural landscapes within the vicinity of Ashford, the broader Stour valley and the still wider later prehistoric landscape of Kent. Of particular importance here is the evidence for activity during the Middle Iron Age, which until relatively recently has seldom been recognised on archaeological sites across Kent (Champion 2007a). The evidence from Hunter Avenue therefore is useful in further understanding the development of the Ashford area and the Stour Valley, but is also important in filling in one of the gaps in understanding of county-wide later prehistoric developments.

Although the extent of actual archaeological evidence from the Hunter Avenue site is somewhat limited as a result of extensive truncation across the site, it has been possible to define four broad phases of later prehistoric activity from the Late Bronze Age to the Late Iron Age. Most, if not all of the evidence suggests the succession of field system features laid out across the site over these phases, with little evidence of domestic occupation. A number of sites in the area have demonstrated field systems or other activity originating in the Middle or Late Bronze Age, as has been shown at Hunter Avenue, but in most cases there has been an apparent hiatus in activity after the Late Bronze Age, with landscape exploitation not being detected again until the Late Iron Age. This hiatus in activity has been recognised at Foster Road, for example, a little more than 1km to the south-east (Powell and Birbeck 2011) and some sites on the CTRL (e.g. Hayden 2001; OAU 1999a). The evidence for the Early and Middle Iron Age from Hunter Avenue, therefore has partly plugged what is still quite a large gap in the later prehistoric chronology of the area. Little

Irwan av. Ashford. (HAA 09)



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